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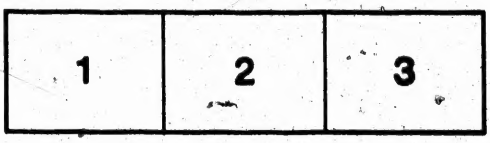

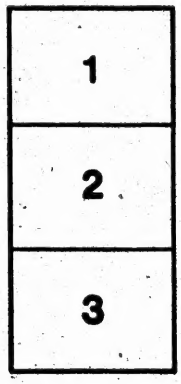

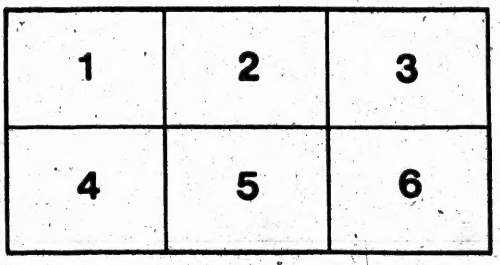

THE KINGDOM OF GOD,

THE TARES AND THE WHEAT.

A NOTION OF THE KINGDOM,

"BRIEF REMARKS,"

ON A SERMON

Preached by the Rev. Isaac Chauncy,

ENTITLED

THE TARES AND THE WHEAT,

PUBLISHED JULY, 1866.

THE TARES AND THE WHEAT.

MATTHEW, CHAPTER XIII.

37.—"He answered and said unto them: he that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man.

38.—"The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one.

39.—"The enemy that sowed them is the Devil. The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels.

40.—"As, therefore, the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world.

41.—"The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall *gather out of His kingdom* all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.

42.—"And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

43.—"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the *kingdom of their Father.*"

A tract has been lately handed me by an esteemed parishioner, entitled, "Brief remarks on a tract entitled 'The Wheat and the Tares,' by the Rev. Jas. Carmichael, and a few remarks for exercised consciences, by one who loves the truth." These "Brief Remarks" I wish to notice. In doing so I would pass over altogether the unnecessary personal attacks made on me by the writer, and simply state that the matter at issue between us is not my character as a minister of the Gospel, but the meaning of the expression, "Kingdom of God, or Kingdom, as used in the parable of the "Tares and the Wheat," in the 13th chapter of Matthew.

I made the following statement in my sermon on the "Tares and the Wheat," (preached on the 30th July, 1865,) "Now I would first "give you the *generally received* opinion of the parable. Our Lord speaks in it of the Visible Church of God under the title of Kingdom of God. It is in fact an epitome of the spiritual aspect of the Church in all ages and for all time." This Mr Grant denies. He asserts that the Kingdom and the Church "are totally distinct." To prove this assertion, he quotes certain texts which he applies to the Church visible, or in plain words, to the Plymouth Brethren. His application of the majority of these texts I totally dissent from. The united testimony of most Christian bodies applying them to the mystical body of Christ, his spiritual and invisible Church, composed of the dead who die in the Lord, both Jew and Gentile, and the living who are born again of water and the Holy Ghost, and those yet to be born whose life will be hid with Christ in God.

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Having read his opinion about the Church, and dissenting from the view he has taken of its constitution, I wait in anxious expectancy for his definition of the Kingdom of God, or Kingdom mentioned by our Saviour once in the parable and three times in the explanation. I wait with some reason, for Mr. Grant himself has asserted that there is a marked difference. But I am forced to confess that I searched in vain throughout the tract for any explanation of the expression. I say distinctly that he avoids the subject altogether, as far as definite reasoning is concerned.

I find a great deal in the tract directed against myself—an uncalled-for attack on Confirmation and Ordination—not a little about the writer's own gifts as an evangelist, and a long paragraph instructing me how to preach myself out of the Church of England into his own sect. All this I find, and I am sure he took a great deal of time and pains in writing on these matters. But, really, such subjects have nothing to do with the point at issue. Out of a tract seven pages long he devotes fourteen lines to the real question; and all that he says approaching to a practical nature, fills up four lines on the fourth page. "*It (the kingdom) is in mystery now, but will be established in power when the Lord comes.*" That the Church is in it, and "*others* in it too, and that Jews will be in it." This is, no doubt, very plain to the author. I think I know also what he is aiming at; but I put it to the public whether he ought not to revise his tract or write another one, entering a little more fully into the subject under discussion. It is hardly fair towards me, for he gives me nothing tangible to grapple with. I might, for instance, make a guess at his meaning, and set to work to expose the folly of his supposed theory, and spend time and my parishioners money in making this tract three times its size in the fervor of the controversy, but what guarantee have I that the author of "Brief Remarks" might not say, "You have mistaken me altogether; I never meant what you supposed I meant, and I gave you no reason to do so. If you refer to page four of my tract you will find that I stated that the Kingdom of God is in mystery now, but will be established in power when the Lord comes."

Perhaps the author forgot the point at issue, or else wrote his title page before he wrote his tract, for, in fact, it ought to have been entitled, "Brief remarks on the ministry of Mr. Carmichael, the rites of Confirmation and Ordination, and a few words on the right mode of preaching, by one who loves the truth." I must, therefore, decline endeavoring to elucidate the mystery, or to have any argument or controversy about it, and ask the author to reconsider the subject, and either revise his present tract, or favor me with another, dealing with the matter between us. The point at issue is very simple. What did our Lord mean by the expression, "Kingdom of heaven, or Kingdom," used once in the parable itself, and three times in the explanation? I wait his reply, and if it is to the point my pen and brains will be at his service.

I think it right, however, to call the attention of the public

to one point. I refer to the manner in which the writer of "Brief Remarks" has misrepresented one important statement in my tract. At page 7 he makes the following quotation:—"Our Lord speaks of the visible Church of God under the title of Kingdom of God," and then he remarks, "An assertion that suits Mr. C.'s purpose, but where is the proof of it." It would have been more in accordance with the acknowledged rules of controversy, and less like Mr. Darby's mode of getting over a difficulty (by misquoting his opponent,*) if the writer of "Brief Remarks" had honestly quoted all that I said, commencing on the 21st line of the 1st page and ending on the 23rd, the quotation would then have appeared as follows: "Now I would first give you the *generally received opinion* of the parable. Our Lord speaks in it of the visible Church of God under the title Kingdom of God." I gave my congregation no private opinion of my own. I made *no rash assertion* to suit my purpose. I simply gave an outline of the generally received opinion of the parable, and I defy the writer of "Brief Remarks" to deny its faithfulness.

I desire now to shew the public that I do not deal in unfounded assertion, and I will, therefore, submit a few honest quotations which bear out my original statement as to the *general acceptation* of that view which refers the parable of "The tares and the wheat" to God's visible Church on earth.

And first, I would refer the writer of "Brief Remarks" to the 3rd volume of Calvin's Institutes, page 88, (published by the Calvin translation society,) for his opinion on the subject. Speaking of the Anabaptists of his day, the Donatists of the fourth century, and the Cathari of the twelfth, he uses these words: "Thinking there is no Church where there is not complete purity and integrity of conduct, they, through a hatred of wickedness, withdraw from a genuine Church, while they think they are shunning the company of the ungodly, they allege that the Church of God is holy. But that they may at the same time understand that it contains a mixture of good and bad, let them hear from the lips of our Saviour that parable in which he compares the Church to a net, in which all kinds of fishes are taken, but not separated till they are brought ashore. Let them hear it (the Church) compared to a field which, planted with good seed, is by the fraud of an enemy mingled with tares, and is not freed of them till brought into the barn. Let them hear, in fine, that it is a threshing floor, in which the collected wheat lies concealed [illegible], until cleansed by the fanners and the sieve, it is at length laid up in the granary. If the Lord declares that the Church will labor under the defect of being burdened with a multitude of wicked unto the day of judgment, it is in vain to look for a church altogether free from blemish."

I would now refer to Dr. Adam Clarke, the renowned Methodist Commentator. "The kingdom of heaven (he says) is God's method

* See answer of Darby and Plymouth Sect, page 6.

"of managing the affairs of the world and this concerns all the church.
"The righteous and the wicked are often mingled in the visible church.
"Every Christian society, however pure its principles may be, has
"its bastard wheat—those who bear a resemblance to the good, but
"whose hearts are not right with God."*

The Rev. J. Gill, (justly prized by the Baptist body) in commenting on the expression, "The kingdom of heaven," uses the following language: "By the kingdom of heaven is not meant the ultimate glory "of the saints in heaven, or the state of happiness in the other world, "for there will be no tares there, nor the Gospel and the ministration "of it; but the Gospel dispensation and times and kingdom of the "Messiah, or rather *the Gospel visible Church state on earth*, called "a kingdom of which Christ is king."†

The Rev. Charles Simeon, the well known author of "Horæ Homileticæ," thus comments on the parable: "To elucidate it more fully "we observe that the members of Christ's visible Church resemble "wheat and tares growing together. These grow together to the "grief of all who are truly upright. "Faithful ministers carry their "complaints to their Lord and master, and from zeal to his honor "would pluck up the tares, but God will not suffer them to make this "arduous attempt. No man whatever is capable of distinguishing all "characters. Many who have specious appearances would be left by "us as wheat, while many who are inwardly sincere would be plucked "up as tares."‡

The Rev. F. F. Trench, a well known minister of the Gospel in the Irish Church, uses the following language: "Nothing appears to "me more certain than that the visible Church of God on earth is and "ever has been a mixture of good and evil. It is composed of imper-"fect creatures, and I should suppose must necessarily partake of "human infirmities. In parable after parable (here he refers in a foot "note to the tares and the wheat, &c.) it seems to me that our Lord "has taught us to expect such a state of things. So much so that if "any Christian denomination seemed to be free from imperfection and "sin, it would want a very prominent feature of the *Kingdom of God* "*on earth*."§ The writer of these words is one of the ablest working clergymen in the Irish Church, and admitted to be as practical a Christian and as polished a scholar as that church could desire to possess.

Lastly, I would quote from the pen of Ezekiel Hopkins, late Bishop of Derry: "We find the *Church*, or the *kingdom of heaven*, in Scrip-"ture, compared to a net cast into the sea, gathering every kind of "fish, both good and bad. Again, it is compared to a field wherein "grow tares as well as corn. This hath been and will be the mixed "condition of God's visible Church on earth."

These quotations, which will stand the test of comparison with the different editions of the respective works from whence they are

* American edition. N. Y.: 1833. † Edmonton edition. ‡ Separation from Established Church, page 98.

taken, are sufficient, I think, to prove that I made no more assertion when I penned the words—"*Now I would first give you the generally received opinion of the parable.* Our Lord speaks in it of the visible Church of God under the title "Kingdom of God." Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists and Episcopalians all agreeing on the subject.

I do not fancy that the author of "Brief Remarks" can consistently notice any of these quotations, for he states (page 5) "that he "passes over quotations from human authors, as he owns no authority "but God's Word." But has he ever thought that John Calvin possessed God's Word—that the evangelical Simeon spent his life in commenting on the sacred work—that Adam Clarke dedicated his Christian piety and classic lore towards its elucidation, and that Gill grew old in searching the sacred page? Has he ever thought that these exalted Christians not only had their Bibles, but were also men of prayer? That it is not beyond the range of possibility that they were as Godly as the author of "Brief Remarks," as learned as the author, and as likely to gain Divine light on the parable of the tares and the wheat, or indeed on any other portion of Scripture. In short, has he ever thought that *his* view, if correct, would throw civilization and godly literature back at least 1,000 years. If there should be no dependence placed on human learning and human effort, on what grounds does the writer of "Brief Remarks" expect to get a hearing for *his* tract. Is he not human, or does he profess to write by inspiration, and on that ground push Calvin, Simeon, Clarke and Gill into the back ground as unworthy of credence, while he exists to wield the pen of inspiration.

Very pointed are the words of Richard Baxter, the renowned nonconformist on this subject—"Take the ablest divine that ever you "knew, suppose him to be Jewel, Andrewe, Usher, Davenant, Calvin, "&c., let him be one that all learned men admire, whose judgment is "sent for from several kingdoms, who hath spent a long life in hard "and very successful studies. Every boy and silly woman that differs "from him in any point shall slight all the wisdom of this man, as if "in comparison of himself he were a fool. Let it come but to the "point of Separation or Antinomianism, and what senseless fellow is "not much wiser than all these divines. And he will pity them as poor, "carnal, ignorant people, who have not the teaching of God as he "has." Of course I do not mean to say that the author of "Brief Remarks" is "a senseless fellow," for I know that he is the very opposite, and I respect him as a Christian gentleman. I am only sorry that his views are identical with those to whom Baxter gave the appellation, and that he voluntarily enunciates the opinions of those of whom it might be said in the language of Solomon, "That in their own conceits they are wiser than seven wise men who can render a reason."

I am well aware the gentleman has a right to set himself against Protestant Christendom if he so desires, but he need not fancy that he

* Volume 15, page 109.

it going to compel me to pursue the same course. I happen to possess a Bible. I trust I pray for light on it, and I do not desire to speak egotistically either when I give utterance to a faint hope that possibly my comment on Scripture might be as correct as his. But, although such might be the case, I have no intention of saying, "From henceforth I disregard the opinion of all human authorities." Nay, whilst surrendering my right of private judgment to no man, I thank God that I can aid that judgment and test its soundness not alone by daily prayer for sacred light, but also by the modulated lustre which streams forth on the sacred page from the piety, learning, and devoted zeal of those undoubted servants of God whose names are written in the book of life, and on the grateful hearts of most of God's dear children.

The course pursued by the author of "Brief Remarks," in writing on any subject but the one under debate, gives me no scope for further remarks. I will wait quietly for the issue for another tract, more logical and to the point. I know that the author has sufficient ability to produce such a pamphlet, and I am sure when produced it will be highly creditable to the sect to which he has allied himself. But lest, in the hurry of his evangelistic labors, he should again forget the point at issue, I will once more reduce it to simple language, "What did our Lord mean by the expression 'Kingdom' of heaven. "King-dom" used once in the parable of the tares and the wheat, and three times in its explanation.